Imam Ghazali

Love

Booklet prepared for free distribution by

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On love

It is mentioned that a person saw an ugly picture in the desert so he asked: "Who are you?" It replied: "I am your evil deeds." He asked: "How can I save myself from you?" It replied: "Sending salutations on the Prophet ﷺ." The Messenger of Allâh ﷺ said: "Sending salutation on me will be light on the *sirât*. Whoever sends 80 salutations on me on Friday, Allâh ﷻ will forgive him the sins of 80 years."

It is related that a person was neglectful of sending salutations on our leader Muhammad ﷺ. One night he saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream in such a state that the Prophet ﷺ paid no attention to him. So he said: "O Messenger of Allâh! Are you angry with me?" He replied: "No." The man said: "Then why are you not looking at me?" He said: "Because I do not recognize you." The man said: "How can you not recognize me when I am a person from your *ummah*? And the *ulamâ* have narrated that you recognize your*ummah* better than how a mother recognizes her child?" He said: "The *ulamâ* are correct. But you do not remember me with salutations. And my recognition of members of my *ummah* is according to how much salutations they send to me." The man then got up from his sleep and made it incumbent upon himself to send 100 salutations to the Prophet ﷺ daily. And so he did that. He then saw the Messenger of Allâh ﷺ after that in a dream and he said to him: "Now I recognize you. And I will intercede on your behalf." This is because he now became a beloved of the Messenger of Allâh ﷺ.

Allâh ﷻ says: "If you have love for Allâh…" The circumstances behind the revelation of this verse is that when the Messenger of Allâh ﷺ invited Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf and his friends to Islam, they replied: "We are like the children of Allâh and we love Allâh far more intensely." So Allâh ﷻ said to His Prophet ﷺ: "If you have love for Allâh then follow my way." On my religion for I am the Messenger of Allâh, I am conveying His message

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to you and I am His proof against you. “so that Allâh may love you and forgive you your sins. And Allâh is forgiving, merciful.” [37] The believers’ love for Allâh ﷻ entails obeying His commands, giving preference to obedience to Him, and seeking His pleasure. Allâh’s love for the believers entails His praising them, rewarding them, pardoning them, showering them with His mercy, protecting them and inspiring them to do good.

The Imâm [Ghazzâlî] says in his *Ihyâ*: Whoever claims four things without doing four things is a liar. Whoever claims to love Paradise without doing acts of obedience is a liar. Whoever claims love of the Prophet ﷺ without loving the *'ulamâ’* and the poor is a liar. Whoever claims fear of the Hell-fire without abstaining from sins is a liar. Whoever claims love of Allâh ﷻ but complains when any calamity afflicts him is a liar. Râbi‘ah said:

تعصي الإله وأنت تظهر حبه — هذا لعمري في القياس بديع

لو كان حبك صادقا لأطعته — إن المحب لمن يحب مطيع

“You disobey Allâh and yet you claim love for Him. I take an oath that this is a very strange way of thinking. Had your love been true, you would have obeyed Him. Surely the lover obeys the one whom he loves.”

The indication and sign of love is agreement with the beloved and abstaining from contradicting him.

It is related that a group of people went to ash-Shiblî *rahimahullâh* so he asked them: “Who are you?” They replied: “We are the ones who love you.” He turned around and then pelted them with stones and so they fled from him. He said to them: “Why are you fleeing from me? If you really loved me, you would not flee from my affliction.” Ash-Shiblî *rahimahullâh* then said: “The people of love drank the cup of love and so the earth and lands became constricted upon them. They recognized Allâh ﷻ as He ought to be recognized. They wandered in His grandeur and were at a loss in His might. They drank the cup of His love and they drowned in the ocean of His intimacy and they took delight in speaking to Him in privacy.” He then said the following couplets:

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"O my Master! The remembrance of love has made me intoxicated. Have you ever seen a lover not intoxicated [in his love]?"

It is said that when a camel becomes intoxicated [with love], it does not eat fodder for 40 days. And if several times the normal load that it carries were to be loaded on it, it will carry it. This is because when the thought of its beloved stirs in its heart, it does not like to eat fodder and does not even bother about the heavy weight that is loaded onto it. All this is because it is longing for its beloved. If a camel can abandon its desire [for food] and carry a heavy weight because of its beloved, have you left the desire to commit an unlawful act for the sake of Allâh ﷻ? Have you abstained from food and drink for the sake of Allâh ﷻ? Have you borne heavy weights [responsibilities] on your selves for the sake of Allâh ﷻ? If you have not done any of these good acts which I have mentioned, then your claim has no meaning whatsoever. It is of no use in this world, in the hereafter, with the creation, nor with the Creator.

'Alî ﷺ said: "The person who yearns for Paradise hastens towards good deeds. The person who fears the Hell-fire prohibits his self from desires. The person who is convinced of death, considers all pleasures to be insignificant."

Ibrâhîm al-Khawwâs was asked about love so he said: "Love entails wiping out all your intentions, burning all attributes and needs, and drowning oneself in the ocean of mere indications."

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On intense love

Love refers to the inclination of one's nature towards something from which you take joy. If that inclination is emphasised and very strong, it is known as *'ishq*. It goes beyond the limits to the extent that the lover becomes a slave of his beloved and he spends whatever he owns for the sake of the beloved. Have you not seen how Zulaykhâ loved Yûsuf ﷺ to such an extent that all her wealth and beauty was finished [because of this love]. She had precious stones and necklaces equivalent to the load of 70 camels. She spent all this wealth for the love of Yûsuf ﷺ. Whoever said to her: "I have seen Yûsuf", she would give that person a necklace that would make him rich. She continued doing this until nothing was left. She used to name everything with the name "Yûsuf". She thus forgot everything but him because of her intense love for him. When she used to raise her head towards the sky, she would see his name written on the stars.

It is narrated that when she embraced Islam and married him, she secluded herself from him and remained in solitude for the worship of Allâh ﷻ. Yûsuf ﷺ would invite her to his bed during the day and she would refuse him till the night. When he would invite her at night, she would delay for the next day. She said to him: "O Yûsuf! I used to love you before I truly recognized Allâh ﷻ. Now that I have truly recognized Him, my intense love for Him has left no room for me to love anyone else. And I do not want anyone in exchange for Him." Yûsuf ﷺ eventually said to her: "It is Allâh ﷻ who has ordered me. He has informed me that He is going to enable you to give birth to two sons whom He is going to make Prophets." She replied: "If Allâh has commanded you this and has made me a means for this, then I obey the command of Allâh ﷻ." It was only then that she went to him.

It is related that Majnûn [who used to love Laylâ profusely] was asked: "What is your name?" He replied: "Laylâ." One day he was asked: "Has Laylâ passed away?" He replied: "Laylâ is in my heart. She did not die. I

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am Laylâ." One day he passed by the house of Laylâ and began looking at the sky. Someone said to him: "O Majnûn! Do not look at the sky, rather look at the wall of Laylâ's house, perhaps you will see her." He replied: "To look at the star whose shadow is falling on the house of Laylâ is sufficient for me."

It is related that Mansûr al-Hallâj *rahimahullâh* was imprisoned for 18 days. Ash-Shiblî *rahimahullâh* went to visit him and said: "O Mansûr! What is the meaning of love?" He replied: "Do not ask me today, ask me tomorrow." The following day they took him out of prison and placed the leather mat for his execution. Ash-Shiblî *rahimahullâh* passed by him so he called out: "O Shiblî! The beginning of love is a burning desire and the end of it results in death."

This is a reference to what happened to al-Hallâj *rahimahullâh* who felt that everything apart from Allâh ﷻ was false and untrue. And he knew for certainty that Allâh ﷻ alone was the truth. When the certainty of Allâh's name *al-Haqq* – the True One – was realized by him, he even forgot his own name. So when he was asked: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am *al-Haqq*."

It is reported that the authenticity of love can be gauged through three qualities: (1) The lover must give preference to the speech of his beloved over the speech of others. (2) He must give preference to being in the company of his beloved over the company of others. (3) He must give preference to the pleasure of his beloved over the pleasure of others…as stated in the book, *al-Muntahâ*. It is stated that love entails the removal of all veils and the exposition of all secrets. And that the ecstasy of love entails the inability of the soul to bear the overpowering of yearning when a person experiences the sweetness of remembrance [of Allâh ﷻ] to such an extent that if one of his limbs are cut off he neither feels it nor perceives it.

It is related that a person was having a bath in the Euphrates river when he heard a person reciting this verse: "You stand aside today, O sinners!" [38] On hearing this verse, he began trembling to such an extent that he drowned and died. Muhammad ibn Abdillâh al-Baghdâdî says: "In Basra I saw a youth standing on a high roof, looking down at the people and saying:

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'Whoever dies as a lover should die like this. There is no good in love without death.' He then threw himself and died."

Al-Junayd *rahimahullâh* said: "Tasawwuf entails giving up testing."

It is related that Dhû an-Nûn al-Misrî *rahimahullâh* entered the Sacred Musjid [of Makkah] and saw a youth naked, lying down and sick under a pillar. He was moaning from a heart that was sorrowful. He says: "I approached him and greeted him. I said to him: 'Who are you, O boy!' He replied: 'I am a stranger, a lover.' I understood what he was saying so I said to him: 'I am also like you.' He began crying and I also began crying on seeing him crying. He said: 'Are you also crying?' I replied: 'I am just like you.' He then cried even louder and gave out a screeching scream and passed away there and then. I placed my garment over him and went out in order to purchase a shroud for him. I purchased it and returned to him and saw that he was not there. So I said to myself: 'Glory to Allâh.' I then heard someone calling out: 'O Dhû an-Nûn! Satan looked for this stranger in this world but did not find him. Mâlik [the keeper of Hell] looked for him but did not find him. Ridwân, [the keeper of Paradise] looked for him in Paradise but did not find him.' I asked: 'So where is he?' I then heard someone calling out: 'Sitting in a seat of truth, in the presence of a sovereign who has control over all.' [39] This was because of his intense love [for Allâh], his abundant obedience to Him and his swift repentance to Him. As related in the book, *Zahr ar-Riyâd*.

A shaykh was asked about a true lover. He replied: "He mixes very little with people, he remains a lot in solitude, he is always in thought, he is outwardly silent, he does not really see when he looks, he does not hear when he is called, he does not understand when he is spoken to, he does not grieve when afflicted by a calamity, when afflicted by hunger he does not even realize it, when he has no clothes he does not perceive this, when someone is abusive towards him he does not fear, he looks at Allâh ﷻ in his hours of solitude and likes to be in company with Him, he speaks to Him in privacy, and he does not dispute with the people of this world in their worldly matters."

Abû Tawwâb an-Nakhshabî wrote the following lines on the signs of love:

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لا تخدعن فللحبيب دلائل — ولديه من تحف الحبيب وسائل
منها تنعمه بمر بلائه — وسروره في كل ما هو فاعل
فالمنع منه عطية مقبولة — والفقر إكرام وبر عاجل
ومن الدلائل أن ترى من عزمه — طوع الحبيب وإن ألح العاذل
ومن الدلائل أن يرى مبتسما — والقلب فيه من الحبيب بلابل
ومن الدلائل أن يرى متفهما — لكلام من يحظى لديه السائل
ومن الدلائل أن يرى متقشفا — متحفظا من كل ما هو قائل

"Do not be deluded for there are signs of a true lover. He has the means of gaining gifts from the beloved. Among them are his enjoyment when He afflicts him with calamities. His happiness at everything that he does. When He holds back from giving him, he considers this to be an accepted gift. He considers poverty to be an honour and a quick way of acquiring piety. Among the signs is that you see him bent on obeying his beloved [Allâh] even if some one persists in censuring him. Among the signs is that he is seen to be smiling while his heart is anxious about his beloved [Allâh]. Among the signs is that he is seen to be trying to comprehend the speech of the one who tries to ask him a question. Among the signs is that he is seen to pay no attention to his appearance, fully thinking [and guarding] everything that he is to say."

Îsâ عليه السلام happened to pass by a youth who was watering an orchard. So this youth said to Îsâ عليه السلام: "Ask your Sustainer to provide me with an atom's weight of His love." Îsâ عليه السلام said to him: "You will not be able to bear an atom's weight." So he said: "Okay, half an atom's weight." Îsâ عليه السلام said: "O my Sustainer! Provide him with half an atom's weight of Your love." Îsâ عليه السلام then continued on his way. After a very long time, he happened to pass by that place where he had met that youth. So he inquired about him. Some people said to him: "He became insane and went away to the mountains." Îsâ عليه السلام asked Allâh سبحانه وتعالى to show this youth to him. He directed him to a spot among the mountains. He saw the youth standing on a rock staring at the skies. Îsâ عليه السلام greeted him but he did not reply. So he said: "I am Îsâ." Allâh سبحانه وتعالى inspired to Îsâ عليه السلام saying: "How can that person who has half an

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atom's weight of My love ever hear the speech of humans? I take an oath by My honour and My grandeur, if I were to cut him with a saw he will not even know that."

The person who makes three claims without purifying himself from three things is in deception. (1) The person who claims to experience the sweetness of the remembrance of Allâh ﷻ while he loves this world. (2) The person who claims to love sincerity and devotion in his deeds while he loves people to honour him. (3) The person who claims to love his Creator without suppressing his soul.

The Messenger of Allâh ﷺ said: "There will come a time when my followers will love five things and forget five things: (1) They will love this world and forget the hereafter. (2) They will love wealth and forget the reckoning. (3) They will love the creation and forget the Creator. (4) They will love sins and forget about repentance. (5) They will love mansions and they will forget the graveyard."

While admonishing a youth, Mansûr ibn 'Ammâr said to him: "O youth! Do not let your youth deceive you. For many a youth delayed repentance, had long hopes but did not think about his death." The youth said: "I will repent tomorrow or the day after tomorrow." The angel of death came to him when he was neglectful of repentance. He thus entered the pit of the grave – where neither wealth, slaves, children, father nor mother could be of any avail to him. Allâh ﷻ says: "The day when neither wealth nor offspring will be of any avail. Except he who comes before Allâh with a sound heart." [40]

O Allâh! Enable us to repent before death, remind us when we become neglectful, and benefit us with the intercession of our Prophet, the best of the Messengers ﷺ.

The true quality of a believer is that he repents on that very day at that very time, that he is remorseful over his sins, that he is pleased with the basic food of the world, that he does not become engrossed in this world, that he

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rather becomes engrossed in doing deeds for the hereafter, and that he worships Allâh ﷻ with sincerity.

There was a stingy hypocrite who took an oath to divorce his wife is she were to give anything in charity. A beggar came to his door and said: "O people of this house! I ask with the right of Allâh that you should give me something." So the woman gave him three flat round loaves of bread. The hypocrite met him on the way and asked him: "Who gave you this bread?" He replied: "A woman from such and such house gave it to me." He was referring to the hypocrite's house. The hypocrite went to his house and asked his wife: "Did I not take an oath to you that you should not give anything to anyone?" She replied: "I gave it for the pleasure of Allâh." The hypocrite went and kindled the oven until it became extremely hot. He then said to his wife: "Get up and throw yourself into this oven for the pleasure of Allâh." The woman got up and took her jewellery. The hypocrite said: "Leave the jewellery one side." She replied: "The lover beautifies himself for his beloved. And I am going to visit my beloved." She then flung herself into the oven. The hypocrite shut the door of the oven onto her and went away. After three days the hypocrite came and opened the door of the oven only to find the woman safe and sound by the power of Allâh ﷻ. The man became extremely surprised at this. Someone called out to him saying: "Don't you know that the fire does not burn Our beloved ones?"

It is related the Âsiyah, the wife of Pharaoh, had been concealing her îmân from Pharaoh. When he came to know of this, he ordered that she should be tortured. And so, they tortured her with various types of punishments. He ordered her to renounce her faith but she refused. He then ordered that stakes be brought and they struck her with them on her sides. He again ordered her to renounce her faith. She replied: "You know that my soul and heart are under the protection of my Sustainer. If you cut me piece by piece it will only increase my love [for Allâh ﷻ]." Mûsâ ﷺ passed by her so she called out: "O Mûsâ! Tell me, is my Sustainer pleased with me or angry with me?" Mûsâ ﷺ replied: "O Âsiyah! The angels of the heavens are anxiously waiting for you. And Allâh ﷻ is mentioning you with pride. So ask whatever you want and it will be fulfilled." She said: "O my Sustainer!

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Build for me a house with You in Paradise and rescue me from Pharaoh and his deeds, and rescue me from the people who are wrongdoers."[41]

Salmân ﷺ says that Pharaoh's wife used to be tortured in the sun. But when they [her torturers] used to turn away from her, the angels would shade her with their wings. And she used to see her dwelling in Paradise. Abû Hurayrah ﷺ reports that Pharaoh pegged four stakes for his wife and forced her to lie down and made her chest to go round like a millstone. And he made her face the intense heat of the sun. She raised her head towards the sky and said: "O my Sustainer! Build for me a house with You in Paradise and rescue me from Pharaoh and his deeds, and rescue me from the people who are wrongdoers."

Al-Hasan says: "Allâh ﷻ saved her in a most honourable manner and raised her to heaven where she is eating and drinking. In this is proof that seeking refuge in Allâh ﷻ, begging to Him, and asking Him to rescue one from trials and tribulations are all acts that have been the way of the righteous and the practice of the believers.

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